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Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy News

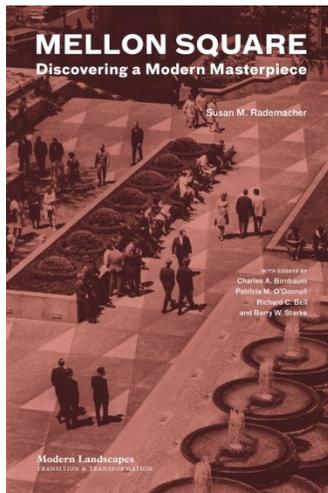
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EDITOR'S NOTE: High-Res Images Available Upon Request

New Book ***Mellon Square: Discovering a Modern Masterpiece***
Tells of the Saving of an Iconic Park and Its Role in the
Ebbs and Flow of Pittsburgh's History

Public Invited to December 4 Book Launch at Carnegie Museum of Art

PITTSBURGH (November 20, 2014) -- The new book, *Mellon Square: Discovering a Modern Masterpiece*, authored by Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy Parks Curator Susan Rademacher and published



by Princeton University Press, provides an in-depth telling of the story of this noted modern landscape, from its celebrated design and construction as an urban oasis and cornerstone of mid-town revitalization during Pittsburgh's first Renaissance, through its decline, and on to its nationally celebrated – and recently completed -- restoration.

The second volume in Princeton's Modern Landscapes series, *Mellon Square: Discovering a Modern Masterpiece* features new photography and archival material, and is the only book to showcase the development of this iconic urban landscape.

Author Susan Rademacher, who managed the restoration of Mellon Square led by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, in partnership with the City of Pittsburgh and with Heritage Landscapes leading the design team, recounts the history of the space, demonstrating that the rise and fall and rebirth of Mellon Square reflects the ebbs and flow of Pittsburgh's economy and reputation during much of the twentieth century.

Rademacher's narrative also includes personal histories of noted project architects James Mitchell and Dahlen Ritchey, and landscape architects John Simonds and Philip Simonds.



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Rademacher (*below left*) serves as Parks Curator for the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy where she has been responsible for landscape planning, design, and preservation since 2007. Rademacher was Editor in Chief of Landscape Architecture magazine from 1984-1987, and was a founding editor of Garden Design magazine. She served as both President of Louisville's Olmsted Parks Conservancy and Assistant Director of Louisville's Metro Parks Department from 1991-2007. Born in Columbus, Georgia, Rademacher is a graduate of Miami University and was a Loeb Fellow in Advanced Environmental Design at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design.



A public book launch, signing and reception will take place from 5:45 PM – 7:30 PM on Thursday December 4, 2014 at the Carnegie

Museum of Art Theater. Co-presented by The Heinz Architectural Center at Carnegie Museum of Art, the presentation will feature remarks by President and Founder of The Cultural Landscape Foundation Charles Birnbaum, Carnegie Museum of Art Curator of Architecture Raymund Ryan, and Rademacher. A reception and book signing will follow in the Carnegie Museum of Art's café. **R.S.V.P. to Savannah Smith at ssmith@pittsburghparks.org, or 412.682.7275 ex. 205.**

Mellon Square: Discovering a Modern Masterpiece is available at local booksellers including Mystery Lovers in Oakmont, Penguin Bookshop in Sewickley, University of Pittsburgh bookstore on Fifth Avenue, and The Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh gift shop, as well as amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

About Mellon Square

The six-year, \$10 million dollar project to restore and maintain Mellon Square was developed by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy in cooperation with the City of Pittsburgh, with Heritage Landscapes leading the design team.

Principal funders of the construction project include The Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Colcom Foundation, and The Eden Hall Foundation, along with a mix of corporate and private donors.

Restoration of the space has remained true to the design and vision of its principal creators, John Ormsbee Simonds (of Simonds & Simonds), recognized as one of the 20th century's most influential landscape architects; and James A. Mitchell (of Mitchell & Ritchey), Pittsburgh's leading Modern architect at the time. In 1955 they completed a revolutionary concept put forth by Richard King Mellon, Mayor David <more>



Lawrence, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, and the Pittsburgh Parking Authority: the nation's first urban green space designed and constructed on the roof of a new subterranean parking facility.

The space fell into disrepair as the city fell on difficult economic times, and the restoration – led by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy's Rademacher – was completed in May 2014. A distinct component of the restoration is a maintenance endowment that ensures that Mellon Square will have the funds needed for perpetual upkeep and preservation.

The Pittsburgh Parking Authority, the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, and the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation also provided critical support in the efforts to revitalize Mellon Square.



Mellon Square Restoration Highlights:



Central Fountain

The heart of Mellon Square is its rectangular pool, which features nine colossal bronze basins. Weighing in at approximately 3,500 lbs. each, the basins are reportedly the largest single bronze basins ever cast in one solid piece. In 2012, the basins were removed and taken to Matthews International, where they were originally cast in the 1950s, to be refurbished. There, the dark green layer of paint that covered the bronze was removed and the patina restored to a golden brown color. The basins were carefully returned to their pedestals at the Square in the fall of 2013.

During the fountain restoration, elements that had been added over the years were removed, including granite sidewalls and wall caps that were not part of the original structure. The Central Fountain has been restored to its original form, featuring curved edges that appear to float over the pavement. Lively movement once again animates the space with the restoration of artfully choreographed water jets and flows that change throughout the day, and the addition of evening lighting.

New Elevated Terrace

Based on an original concept by Simonds & Simonds and Mitchell & Ritchey, a new public area has been added overlooking Smithfield Street. The Terrace adds an additional 15 percent more useable space to the Square, offers an inviting setting for quiet lunchtime public programs and private events, and presents new views of the Cascade Fountain and the façade of the 100 year-old Henry W. Oliver Building.

Interpretive Wall

The story of Mellon Square will be illustrated by a permanent display under the canopy next to the Sixth Avenue steps. There visitors and passersby will discover the Square's history and national significance, its relationship to the Mellon family, and its important role in Pittsburgh's first Renaissance.

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Restoration of the Cascade Fountain

Long dormant because of damage and deterioration, the Cascade Fountain once again flows, its sparkling water play visible not only from the Terrace, but also by pedestrians and traffic moving along at street level. The fountain provides an inviting display of sound and movement as water tumbles down through a series of elevated pools alongside the grand staircase, culminating in a basin at the corner of Smithfield and Oliver.

Lighting

Mellon Square is designed to be enjoyed after dark, with newer energy-efficient technologies employed to recapture the original appeal of the Square in the evening while also meeting current safety standards. LED lights have been installed in the walls to illuminate walkways and highlight the



magnificently patterned paving, while up-lighting has been placed to emphasize the sculptural figures of trees. Additional lighting transforms the fountains, enhancing their visual beauty and prominence.

Paving and Drainage

Mellon Square's unique paving scheme – a “rustic terrazzo” pattern of marble chips and narrow bronze strips arranged to form interlocking triangles – is a signature of the space.

During renovation, failed areas of paving were removed, the sub-base was corrected, and new paving was reconstructed.

Repairs were also made to the storm water drain systems. The result is a splendid marble carpet that unifies the Square's asymmetrical array of fountains, planters, plants and benches.



Mellon Square Site Construction: FRANCO; PJ Dick; **Plumbing:** Definis Mechanical; **Electric:** Allegheny City Electric; **Waterproofing:** CPS Construction Group; **Railings:** Gerard Daniels Worldwide; Louis Emmel Ornamental Iron; **Landscaping and Irrigation:** Eisler Landscaping; Apollo Irrigation; **Bronze:** Matthews International; **Survey:** Liadis Engineering; **Soil and Trucking:** Natural Sand Company

Mellon Square Preservation, Interpretation & Management Plan (2009) **Team Credits:**

Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners, with Robert Silman Associates, Grenald Waldron Associates, and Neil Silberman, with contributions by EP&D, MTR Landscape Architects, LaQuatra Bonci Associates, and The Cultural Landscape Foundation.

Restoration Project (2011) **Team Credits:**

Heritage Landscapes, with Hilbish McGee Lighting Design, Mortar & ink, Atlantic Engineering Services, Allen & Shariff Electrical, Pfaffmann + Associates, and HydroDramatics.

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